



BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN DECLARATION ON COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL CRIME POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Fifteenth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (“15th AMMTC”) was convened on 29 September 2021 via videoconference;

EXPRESSING our serious concern over the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), and its implications to the threats of and cooperation against transnational crime in this region;

RECALLING the ASEAN Leaders’ pronouncement to remain steadfast in their commitment to combat terrorism, radicalisation, violent extremism, and transnational crime, particularly amidst the challenges and new threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, towards a caring, prepared and prosperous ASEAN;

FURTHER RECALLING the ASEAN Leaders’ agreement on the importance of charting a new path for ASEAN beyond 2025 that enables ASEAN to be better prepared and adaptive to a fast and dramatically changing world;

REAFFIRMING the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Combating Transnational Crime of 13 September 2015, the Manila Declaration to Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism of 20 September 2017, the ASEAN Declaration to Prevent and Combat Cybercrime of 13 November 2017;

REAFFIRMING FURTHER various action plans adopted by the AMMTC such as the ASEAN Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2015), the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2018), and subsequent work plans, such as the Bohol Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Work Plan 2017-2020, and Work Plan of the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism 2019-2025 (Bali Work Plan);

FOSTERING FURTHER the cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaboration through addressing Trafficking-in-Persons in the review of the Bohol Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Work Plan 2017-2020, including the design and implementation of its successor Work Plan and the establishment of a Focal Point System of National ACTIP Representatives;

RESTATING our commitment to combating transnational crime and the full and effective implementation of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) Work Programme to Implement the ASEAN Plan of Action in Combating Transnational Crime 2016 - 2025;

RECOGNISING the need for law enforcement officials to be vigilant, adaptable and flexible in addressing the new and evolving transnational crime trends in the post-COVID-19 landscape, including the accelerated digitisation of society, whilst also protecting the lives and well-being of our peoples;

DO HEREBY DECLARE TO:

1. **INTENSIFY** our collective efforts to prevent and combat transnational crime, including through promoting cross-pillar and cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination in the post-pandemic era;
2. **REINFORCE** the effective and comprehensive implementation of the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (ASEAN MLAT), the ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism (ACCT), the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) as well as the SOMTC Work Programme to Implement the ASEAN Plan of Action in Transnational Crime, and relevant action plans and work plans as adopted by the AMMTC, and its corresponding cross-sectoral and Dialogue Partners work plans;
3. **ENHANCE** cooperation and coordination among ASEAN law enforcement operational as well as intelligence units responsible for tackling transnational crime through the exchange of information, experiences and good practices on new methods and modus operandi, and in the implementation of the regional action plans and work plans, including through virtual platforms;
4. **EXPLORE** modalities to promote practical cooperation among ASEAN law enforcement agencies, such as through table-top exercises, field training exercises and coordination, amongst others, to further enhance their capacity and capability in responding to new and emerging challenges posed by transnational crime;
5. **ENCOURAGE** strengthening border management cooperation in accordance with respective domestic laws, rules, regulations and policies, to prevent criminal groups to take advantage of the pandemic situation, particularly to combat illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, smuggling of goods, people and weapons, as well as forgeries of identification, health certificates and travel documents;

6. **ENHANCE** awareness campaigns and educational efforts especially for vulnerable groups in order to increase the public's vigilance towards new and emerging transnational crime trends in the post-pandemic era;
7. **CONDUCT** analysis and studies of transnational crime in Southeast Asia and its connection with the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to assist the ASEAN Member States in their efforts to address the short-term and long-term impact and risks associated with this issue;
8. **INTENSIFY** efforts to combat wildlife trafficking through the effective implementation of ASEAN Guidelines for Detecting and Preventing Wildlife Trafficking, and **TASK** our Senior Officials to recommend ways to minimise risks of zoonotic diseases transmission from illegal wildlife trade and high-risk consumptive behaviour of and interaction with wildlife, especially associated with zoonotic diseases, in line with the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF);
9. **STRENGTHEN** cooperation with ASEAN Dialogue Partners, external parties and all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, non-governmental organisations and relevant agencies and organisations, such as ASEANAPOL, INTERPOL, and the United Nations agencies, among others, while continuing to strengthen and uphold ASEAN Centrality and Unity; and
10. **MONITOR AND REVIEW** the implementation of this Declaration under the oversight and coordination of the SOMTC Voluntary Lead Shepherds and other ASEAN Member States.

ADOPTED in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, on the Twenty Ninth Day of September in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty One, in a single original copy in the English language.